ECHIDNA HYSTRIX, Cuv.

Spiny Echidna.

Myrmecophaga aculeata, Shaw, Nat. Misc., vol. iii. pl. 109.

Aculeated Ant-eater, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. i. pt. 1. p. 175.

Ornithorhynchus Hystrix, Home, Phil. Trans. 1802, p. 348.

Echidna Hystrix, Cuv. Règ. Anim.—Leach, Zool. Misc., vol. ii.

Echidna Hystrix, Cuv. Règ. Anim.—Leach, Zool. Misc., vol. ii. t. 90.—List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus., p. 192.

Tachyglossus aculeatus, (Illiger) Schreb. Saugth., t. lxiii. B. Echidna longiaculeata, Tiedem. Zool., tom. i. p. 592.

——— Australiensis, Lesson.

— aculeata, Waterh. Nat. Hist. Mamm., vol. i. p. 41.

Dun-ung-er-de, Aborigines of the Toodyay and Guildford Districts of Western Australia.

Nyoong-arn, Aborigines of the York district.

The sandy and sterile districts which so frequently occur over the whole of the southern portions of the Australian continent constitute the native habitat of the *Echidna Hystrix*, but although so very generally dispersed, it is nowhere abundant; I have also met with it in the islands in Bass's Straits, and Mr. Gilbert obtained a single example in Western Australia, which had been taken on a farm situate on the upper part of the eastern branch of the river Avon; he subsequently learnt from the natives that it had been seen in the Toodyay district and in the vicinity of Guildford. No instance of its occurring to the northward of the colonies has yet been recorded, and in all probability, like the Ornithorhynchus, it is strictly confined to the southern part of the country.

As I had but little opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the habits of this animal in a state of nature, and my friend George Bennett, Esq., has been more fortunate in this respect, I cannot perhaps do better than transcribe the account published by him in his 'Wanderings in New South Wales, &c.'

"Among other extraordinary animals furnished to the naturalist in this interesting country is the *Echidna*, or 'native Porcupine,' the Nickobejan and Jannocumbine of the natives. It inhabits mountain ranges, burrowing with extraordinary facility, and producing its young in December.

"At Goulburn Plains the natives brought me a young living specimen of this animal which they had just caught upon the ranges: they called it Jannocumbine, and fed it upon ants and ants' eggs. It was often taken to an ant-hill to provide itself with food: from being so young it had an unsteady walk, and was covered with short sharp spines projecting above the fur. On expressing a fear to the natives of not being able to keep it alive, they replied that 'it would not now die, as it had prickles on;' meaning, I suppose, that it could feed and provide for itself, not requiring the fostering care of its parents. On asking whether it was a male or female, they examined the hind feet for the spurs, and, seeing them, declared it to be a male. It sleeps during the day, running about and feeding at night. Its movements are tardy, the principal exertions being made when burrowing. When touched upon the under surface, or uncovered parts of its body, or when attacked by dogs, it rolls, like the hedgehog, into a spherical form, the prickly coat forming a good defence against the canine race, who have a decided aversion to have their noses pricked. When attacked, it has been known to burrow to a great depth in a surprising short period of time.

"The Echidna is eaten by the natives, who declare it to be 'very good, and, like pig, very fat.' Europeans who have eaten of them confirm this opinion, and observe that they taste similar to a sucking-pig. This animal, when scratching, or rather cleaning itself, uses only the hind claws, lying in different positions, so as to enable it to reach the part of the body to be operated upon. The power of erecting the spines and rolling itself into a spherical form makes an excellent defence against many of its enemies.

"I consider that there are two species of this genus existing: first, E. Hystrix, or Spiny Echidna, which is found on the mountain ridges in the colony of New South Wales; and the second, E. setosa, or Bristly Echidna, which is found more common in Van Diemen's Land. The first species attains a large size; it is stated in our works of natural history as being the size of a hedgehog; my young specimen was fully that. At 'Newington,' the residence of John Blaxland, Esq., I had an opportunity of seeing a specimen full fourteen inches long and of proportionate circumference; it fed upon milk and eggs, the eggs boiled hard and chopped up small, with rice; its motion was heavy and slow; it was of a perfectly harmless disposition. When disturbed from its place of retreat it would feed during the day, but was difficult to remove from the cask in which it was placed, on account of its firmly fixing itself at the bottom; it feeds by thrusting out the tongue, to which organ the food is attached, and then withdrawing it. Mine moved about, and drank milk at night, taking little other food. After keeping it for nearly seven months, I found it one morning dead."

In a state of nature the food consists of ants, of which a never-failing supply can at all times be procured,